

Sy Hersh: The Role of the Press During Scandals (1987)

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Seymour Hersh discusses the administration of Ronald Reagan, its scandals, and the relationship with the press. Hersh makes comparisons with the Watergate scandal, and the press' performance during that period.

is a legendary investigative journalist. He catapulted to fame when he broke the story of the infamous My Lai massacre of Vietnamese civilians by U.S. troops. He has won practically every single award in journalism. Author of many books his latest is Chain of Command. He is a regular contributor to The New Yorker where he broke the story of U.S. torture of prisoners.

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tonight's guest is seymour hersh prize-winning author and journalist investigative journalist who's written for the new york times and written a number of books from the my lai massacre to his recent book on the Korean Airlines flight double-oh-seven to tonight's topic the iran-contra affair mr. Hirsch has made it a career out of finding the truth behind the headlines and now without further ado I'd like to present mr. Seymour Hersh this is so weird I'm so far back but that's the way it is apparently but we get closer to the mic squeals somebody said as best as I can I think I'll just try and tell you what's on my mind and we'll do some questions and I should say that I'm actually in the middle of a book not so much on the iran-contra affair but on the foreign policy of Reagan and as such I have a lot of ideas on the press and its role in society since I which I'm qualified to talk about and basically I've been following the issue very close at before I begin I want to say to those of you who haven't caught up with the news tonight that it is true that the White House announced I guess late this afternoon that the 82nd airborne and a battalion of Marines have successfully invaded Luxembourg and it will be going ashore at Monaco tomorrow it's my little funny way of talking a little bit about sort of beginning by talking about another issue that's very interesting obviously Grenada some of you might remember their famous Grenada invasion of 1983 which was subsequent

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invasion of 1983 which was subsequent we proved I guess basically that no nation with a population of fewer than 400,000 is safe from American democracy I don't know what else we proved it was an amazing experience if you think about it Grenadiers population is 110,000 roughly the size that of the Rose Bowl that many people fit into the Rose Bowl once a year and son-of-a-gun we beat him was a great victory and maybe the students that we were told were in peril maybe they really weren't in peril but that was a minor fact maybe there really wasn't 2,000 Cuban armed to the teeth Cuban warriors there but that's the I the fact maybe it took the 82nd airborne something like four days to go three miles but that was beside the fact what happened is we accept it very jingoistic Lee and I think the American press are those squealing and yelling about not being included in the battle plans basically behaved I guess there's any press would and in any country at war even horrors tan xub the Yugoslavia press agency or toss the Soviet press agency out I would say that it's very hard to differentiate the great American democratic free press from some of the mouthpiece

press when it comes to something like Grenada in which an incident in which the president United States said that met every standard of international law because we've been asked in by other countries in the Eastern Caribbean sort of the rule of law Faust by the president and explaining the invasion was that you had asked you to beat up you and that's okay well this is gonna be very very tough on Grenada and the underpinnings of it and

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Grenada and the underpinnings of it and the whole story isn't in what I'm saying I guess is my way of looking at the Reagan administration he's a little different I don't focus on iran-contra my own instinct is that what went wrong in this government probably went wrong very early probably as soon as they got into office that seems to be the pattern people tend to behave in a consistent way that his administration's do they don't change their colors very often and I think I think if let me just postulate this to you if Robert McFarlane and I'm assuming some level of not in knowledge about the iran-contra affair McFarlane was the former national security adviser they've been asked to go back in by by the President to John Poindexter then the national security adviser to go to Tehran last year and in Tehran he was going to negotiate trade some weapons he flew in from Israel traits and weapons for some hostages that were held by various factions Shiite factions in Beirut over which we believe the Iranians had a lot of control one of the immediate hitches of course was as is that as McFarlane discovered the Iranians were basically rug traders and when he got there they told them right away that they wanted more weapons if they were going to produce some hostages I guess we really didn't get down to you know if you give us 30 more weapons we'll give you two legs or two arms when you get that close to that but it was a lot of rough trading a lot of rough talking but I wonder what would happen and it precipitated McCart McFarlane left the thing fell apart eventually a newspaper in Beirut told us about it and that's how we first learned I wonder what would happen if McFarland had made it supposed to be gone in there and they'd asked for more weapons or suppose they were more satisfied with the weapons we gave and we didn't give him the best we had the towel mr. steel W

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the best we had the towel mr. steel W missiles we gave them we're not the most sophisticated there's other more sophisticated level of missions of missiles that we did not give the Iranians and I'm sure they knew it I suppose MacFarlane had been successful it's my belief that he probably would have the plane called for him to come back to Washington with the hostages suppose three or four people were indeed did pop out of Beirut he would have gone to Washington that would have been a ceremony in the White House Ion and maybe the Ayatollah would have been praised in the sky for his cooperation maybe it would have been mention but the bottom line is it would have gone down I think it would have gone down very easily if he had made if he had gotten it back and even indicated the Iranians had helped I think all of us would not have looked since we're such a country of getting things done I think all of us would have now not have looked very far much further we would have settled we had immediate success we got our hostages back and that would have made most of us happy and the underlying problem that we were negotiating in effect in secret against their policy running the policy in secret totally diametrically opposed to our public policy I think what would've been much of a player well in all of this there's some interesting things for me as somebody who's been in Washington for two mostly and somebody has been reading and watching presidents for a long time I think basically we're up the creek in our country in terms of what we and the press can do for you I think there's been a lot of misunderstanding about our role how good we are how bad we are whether were the messengers of whether the public's tired of the affair or not I think the issue transcends the press immediately the problem in this country and it gets down to some of the basic things we want from a president we expect from the president the stand as we hold them to and I think if you go back I'll go back just as far as the Cold War it's my belief that since the advent of the Cold War and the notion that American policy was fueled an anti-sovietism anti Russian policy not

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anti-sovietism anti Russian policy not necessarily anti-communism policy because we can live with the Communists in China and elsewhere on if we have to anti Soviet style communism I think you could almost run a straight line and the foreign policy of all of our presidents I don't think the foreign policy of any president basically from Truman on down has been significantly different the core of the policy has always been basically anti-communism when pushed when Jimmy Carter tried to be a little different in the end he had his Iran caper to I think ultimately to basic I'm not saying that's not enormous differences between a Mondale and a Reagan on social issues or wherever it's going to be the next candidate for the Republicans and Democrats on all of the issues that I think are very important to obviously student loans Oh welfare farm issues but separating out those the foreign policy is amazing the uniform and you see a couple of amazing trends I think one of them is that we've given our presidents basically two divine rights in foreign policy one of them is that the right to send our sons and daughters pluck them from our house you send you people into combat without meeting any of the constitutional prerequisites and actually there's there's legislation now the War Powers Act of 1973 also has another burden on the president informing Congress getting their consent in advance we fabricated that right to the president that's almost a divine right of the presidency he can send us anywhere explain it later whether it's in Grenada or if they have to go to Iran into Iran the mile hill just do it and ask questions first or into Nicaragua he'll do it first and then come back for the sanction the second secondary and a sort of obvious corollary Divine Right is to write the lie to us about it and I think if you go back through history you'll find the American presidency without any blinking at all on foreign policy have lied to us

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at all on foreign policy have lied to us Jack Kennedy lied to us about Louis Richard Nixon all the way we can talk about him forever Lyndon Johnson about the initial Vietnam caper the intrusion our incursion into the Dominican Republic in 1965 Jimmy Carter had his Iran Desert won the scandal the flop in the desert when he tried to rescue the hostages Oh Jerry Ford had this mayagüez some he might remember the freight the the group of American sailors that were seized by the Cambodian force in 1975 forty-one Marines were killed trying to free him after they'd already been freed we knew they've been freed we still sent the Marines in some of them to die because we needed the show of force we just lost the war in Vietnam Reagan's had as I said as his Grenada his Marines in Lebanon why more people aren't angry at Reagan for killing 241 Marines in Lebanon is a great mystery to me in all of this there are some sort of sad truths one of them is as I said we're all loyal it's a wonderful country America is a very unique place it's a kind of place of which somebody like me can go around and make a living and be successful you know criticizing my government openly and giving them a lot of grief and B I'm being taken seriously for it not being thrown to jail I we all recognize and appreciate the enormous freedoms we have however there's some very I think terribly disturbing trends in the way we treat our people and our attitudes towards our people in public life one obvious thing is as citizens we do the government please if you need come and take our children our sons and daughters now and send them off in two basically trained them in the art of committing mass murder in the name of democracy and send them off to do it with our blessing the president has the right to come and take our children and put him in the war in return what do we

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put him in the war in return what do we ask from our presidents and our national security leaders we all know that our own families there's nothing as important as a child we knew growing up that you don't lie to mother or father on serious issues everybody has petit white lies and as a parent you learned that one of the things you try not to do particularly is you truly get others lie to them manipulative myths of course absolutely silly and counterproductive and as you get older and wiser you stop doing it as a parent just as you stop doing it as a child we all learn in life that the only real true happiness comes with having a partner in life in whom you have enormous confidence and trust these are all things that we hold very dear in our own life our life's cannot live without them there's nothing unique or uniquely American or unique that happens around the world that's normal and just think about it the same standards we insist in on our own family our own personal life we no longer begin to expect or demand from our national leaders the notion that we would hold

Ronald Reagan to the same level of credibility we insist our children my insist my children on critical issues hold it's just it's not there it's a laugh riot I mean I think that's a reality some of you may still believe in the Tooth Fairy and have some illusions about some of the things mr. Reagan says or does and he's not a typical of presidents all presidents will lie to us and have I'm making that point Reagan's very much in line with what we've had for 30 or 40 years since the Cold War began and our expectations has fallen have fallen so low that the president and the National Security Advisor can be shown as they have been to have manipulated and lied to us repeatedly in the iran-contra affair for sure and in many other Affairs I just wrote a story for the New York Times magazine a month ago in which I said like it or don't like it the famous and bombing raid on Libya that we took part

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bombing raid on Libya that we took part in our f-111 some England remember that raid mrs. Thatcher Magra Thatcher was all upset about it was not really aimed at anything other than the assassination of Qaddafi that was a main target for nine of the planes the mission was to kill him and/or his family both of which he was in a tent either in a tent or a house a few hundred yards away the pilots were instructed that they were to bomb both the house and in which he has a children and an adopted child and target them on the grounds you could target the family it was a CIA study done saying that you could target the family on the grounds that in Bedouin culture the desert culture a man like Gaddafi is diminished even more whether you get him or don't get him if he cannot protect this family so even if you kill his children and wife and children and miss him you've diminished him in the standing of his countrymen how such reasoning gets into the White House isn't really clear I think anything would have gone I guess by 1986 the bombs fell Qaddafi was missed they hit his tent but they hit nearest 10th missed him one of his children an adopted daughter was killed two of his children a boy three and a boy four were critically injured and put in intensive care for a few weeks all eight of children were hospitalized along with his wife I don't know what honor that does to America to have this go on I don't know what honor I don't know what kind of integrity what kind of process it is to have to do it and of course cover it in a series of lies as they have done so I guess what I'm saying is I think it's we're much further down the road than some of you might the most people I think we've been lied to systematically since the man got no office about foreign policy I think we've been lied to about the policy in South Africa I think we've been lied to about the policy in the Middle East I think we've been lied to especially about the policy in Central America I think obviously we've been lied to about the policy in the iran-contra affair but I think it's deeper I don't think it's just something that happened

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think it's just something that happened I don't think there was one critical misjudgment in 1985-86 over Iran I think it's systemic and endemic and I also think the last place you're gonna get the whole story is gonna be from the press and I think the fact that you haven't heard it and the press doesn't tell it to you doesn't mean much because there's an awful truth that I've come to I think it's a truth and I think I've come to understand it I'll tell you something if the president added States and his national security liar I'm not admitted advisor his national security adviser and his minions lie to us it's not a natural unnatural mistake actually if the president and the people around them lie to the press they can get away with anything and I'm gonna give you some evidence then I'm gonna give you my view of history or than that in a minute to make my point but hear me out I think we in the press are absolutely helpless if we have a president who's willing to sustain a lie and a national security apparatus is willing to go along with it we can't penetrate the odds are too hard against this you cannot believe the bombshells that are lying out there folks there have been whole companies of American Rangers put into combat that we don't know about yet whether you hear about it or not whether you can get enough proof there's an awful lot of stuff that's going down in this administration and others too I think there's been stuff with the Israeli intelligence service that will be very troubling to a lot of Americans if it can get out and how can I demonstrate to you that in this maze that the press really is sort of more of a bystander than a lot of people want to believe our problem is we've been spoiled but anybody I can always touch base I used to talk a lot about the Vietnam wars in the introduction you heard I did a story and there

was the first reporter to write about the me line massacre that was a massacre that took place in 1968 almost 20 years ago in which a army company was parachuted was helicoptered into a what was believed to be a heavy vietnamese combat area and they went

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vietnamese combat area and they went into a village looking for a fight and they found anywhere from 345 to 576 depending on who's count civilians men women children mostly old men mostly women and children gather around cooking their morning breakfast in the morning rice about seven o'clock they rounded up the people put them in three large groups and machine-gunned them executed them over about four or five hours casual raping along the way at one point they stopped and they had it took a lunch break and they sat there amidst the bodies eating sea rations all of this was observed by officers flying above them in various patterns the the air above the operation the task force was known as task force Barker in the northern Vietnam at five hundred feet the battalion commander at fifteen hundred feet that was the regimental commander the the one-star division commander was at two thousand and above him was the Major General in charge of everything all were there all watched of course one lieutenant got prosecuted for it Lieutenant William Calley the real lesson is I started with that and I used to talk about Vietnam but you can't talk about you know it's funny I don't on me when I was growing up in the 40s and 50s in Chicago World War one was always some sort of distant Mirage it was Flanders Fields and fields of poppies and the poems of Sassoon and a few other things a few novels and it seems clear now that for most young people who grew up in the late 70s and 80s Vietnam was your Sanders field in your fields of poppies it's a distant war it's hard to relate to it but what I think you all can relate to is Watergate if by none other than the mechanism of the movies everybody here has seen all the president's men right have you on home box office video anybody not seen all the president's men Redford Hoffman

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the president's men Redford Hoffman Woodward Bernstein you know they'll get a story about Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein Bob Redford and and Dustin Hoffman played the starring roles about how they and here's this storyline these two intrepid reporters nothing I say should be in any way meant to denigrate what they did they what they did is outstanding and they've been appropriately and rewarded for it is not enough we can say about him they did great stuff however there's the storyline as these two intrepid reporters find out about this bad guy Nixon and write a story and they bring him down great victory for the press the movie was the big hit sort of like sort of like an ancient version of Rambo you know and enrollment and journalism school soared everybody got all excited about journalism is a powerful place a place to shape things and let me give you my definition of Watergate in light of that movie and the perception you have in light of the notion that the press actually did in mr. rate mr. Nixon and my notion has the same sort of beginning point as I as I would argue you could begin with Reagan I begin an inauguration day on January 20 1969 Nixon gets elected some of this is ancient history for you so bear with me you won't remember this but it was a close election he beat Hubert Humphrey by a few percentage points the Democrat Vietnam was the critical issue and Nixon one of his campaign plaques was programs was planks rather was Nixon said I have a secret plan to end the war well it turns out he did after being elected he decided he was gonna win it which was a secret plan he was gonna win it and what he was going to do first is let the other guys know the North Vietnamese our enemy that he was tougher than Lyndon Johnson and willing to risk more he ordered the b-52 sleep our Strategic Air Command to

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b-52 sleep our Strategic Air Command to begin bombing Cambodia Cambodia was a neutral country adjacent to South Vietnam the North Vietnamese and Viet communist troops as the Vietcong we call him would hit us in the south retreat across the border and hide out there safe a sanctuary we didn't go across the border there'd been a lot of calls by the military to go across the border in the Johnson era but Johnson basically acceded to the advice of his Joint Chiefs of Staff who said in effect you know mr. president we're

not doing so well in the one war we're in now the south white take it to another country so he never did Nixon changed the rules he wanted to be 52s to begin bombing the sanctuaries but he didn't want anybody to know about it so you authorized double bookkeeping basically he told these pilots that they were to bomb Cambodia and report the bombs inside their own chain of command as being in South Vietnam Congress was going to vote funds for bombs that were going to be fault that we're gonna fall in Cambodia but Congress was gonna be told the bombs are falling in South Vietnam so was everybody else inside the military chain of command mr. Kissinger the Secretary of the National Security Adviser his deputy Al Haig the earth's while candidate he as you know he's coming here soon I'm sure will be here within minutes as Mort Sahl said he's thrown his helmet into the ring that'll be an interesting candidacy it for sure anyway hey Kissinger picked targets the secret bombing began March 16th 1969 Nixon had been in office less than two months we begin dropping bombs on Cambodia next 14 months 3630 b-52s go over Cambodia a hundred and ten thousand tons of bombs by the way everything I'm telling you came out in subsequent investigations it's all empirical data anybody want to challenge me and I'll tell you where you can find it the facts and the various hearings 110,000 tons of bombs fall in Cambodia in secrecy in May

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bombs fall in Cambodia in secrecy in May two months after the secret bombing began a colleague of mine at the New York Times bill Beecher writes the story about increasing pressure on North Vietnam and accurately says one thing we've done is had a b-52 plane bombed Cambodia he doesn't say it's systematic he doesn't say it's been secretly being secretly designed by the White House with the targets picked by Kissinger and Haig and the president he doesn't say it's been going on for two months and it's gonna continue forever but the White House doesn't know what else he knows out of this story which made no impact at all in the public didn't even make the news that night just another little story in The New York Times began then a 21 month program of illegal and unconstitutional obviously wiretapping 13 members of the government including people like the closest aide to the Secretary of State and the closest aide to the Secretary of Defense were wiretapped Kissinger zone staff five six people in his own staff were wired to have four newsmen among the Marvin calestous recently was signed a contract to go to Harvard and head up some center there then then with CBS for wiretapped 21 months the taps ran the February of 71 in secret in May 14 months later 1970s some of you remember this we invaded Cambodia Nixon authorized ground troops to go into Cambodia some of you might remember Kent State the students were shot and killed the Kent State the four students by the National Guard the country went up in smoke it's hard to believe it now but at that time we were very politically involved this country the Vietnam War was very much on everybody's fingertips Nixon went on television to talk to us about it he had an American flag in his lapel and a portrait of Lincoln behind him and of course sweat on his brow and a heavy beard every cliché in a big nose he's actually very Nixon of all like all the people it's the most interesting to me he's so bright and very bright and very I think evil Nixon tells us that

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very I think evil Nixon tells us that we've never violated the neutrality of Cambodia at this point he's put a hundred and ten thousand tons of bombs fourteen months of bombs on Cambodia b-52 bombers and he looks us in the eye and he says it's the first time we've ever violated the neutrality I don't know what's worse his lie or the fact that he knew he could get away with it bad summer for Nixon if you remember it was a terrible summer of anti-war demonstrations he was worried about being green Amin ated for the election for the presidential prep for the presidency by his own party according to memoirs he nominates two candidates for the Supreme Court Haynesworth and Carswell both get rejected if you think about it that almost never happens even ed Meese with all the questions about his credentials sailed through the Senate you don't reject the president's candidate last one had been jected was Louis Strauss in the Eisenhower administration for Secretary of Commerce he's in big trouble he goes down a dirty he orders the CIA to go after a yen day in Chile he thinks the yen day selection in Chile Salvadorian the Gosselin's is elected as a socialist leader of Chile he thinks that's dangerous even though every agency tells him there's no problem he goes after a yen day he also orders the CIA to begin operating in secret against American anti-war students and black students the CIA's begins a program that would lead to files I think more than a hundred thousand doses

collected by 1974 when there was subsequent investigations in the spring of 71 Daniel Ellsberg publishes the Pentagon Papers former Pentagon aid advisor to the Robert McNamara the White House goes bongo over this a secret police unit g-chord Liddy Howard hunt the White House plumbers if you remember that group is set up operating out of the White House just like Oliver North did and John Poindexter they begin going after Ellsberg they break into the office of a cycle analysis and Ken and in Beverly Hills in September 1971 obviously looking for evidence that he was linked to the KGB or what to recruit this to do

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to the KGB or what to recruit this to do the break-in hunt and Liddy hunt out of the CIA Lydia to the FBI both working for the White House go back to old CA hands from the Bay of Pigs with whom hunted worked hunt was a longtime operative had been working in the Bay of Pigs for the CIA five Cuban Americans are brought out to California guys by the name of Sturges Gonzales Barker Martinez and they help plan the operation it's supposed to be a covert break-in into the office of the Cyclops ICO analyst his name is Lewis feely but of course everything goes wrong they made in a waxed key but the key didn't work the building was under guard they ended up using a crowbar to get into the window they ended up using a get into the office and a crowbar to get into the files and afterwards they realized they hadn't gone in covertly so they took a thousand tablet jar of em print tablets smashed in it threw it around the room obviously trying to suggest to the police that a junkie looking for an emperor in fix came in and had burglarized the office lord knows why they did it what I'm telling you was in public record and a grand jury here proceeding in a County grand jury proceeding in la big deal some guy gets caught a local black guy gets busted a couple weeks later for the break-in and ascent to jail where remain until after Watergate in the group disbands in April Nixon and the people decide they want to get some intelligence on the White House I mean on the Democratic National Committee Larry O'Brien the former Johnson aide runs in that Sherman National Committee they have offices in the Watergate office building they asked Hunt Liddy to go and do a bug do a wiretap hunt Liddy turned to the five Cuban Americans again who trot up this time not to LA but to Washington they buy equipment they penetrate the offices in the Watergate at night they put bugs in to the phones they're in the offices and they leave go back home two things wrong with the bug one it doesn't work for more than a few weeks and secondly it's in the wrong office they're not getting Larry O'Brien but

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they're not getting Larry O'Brien but they're getting a deputy in May 72 Jagger Hoover dies the FBI director Daniel Ellsberg none other comes to lead an anti-war demonstration in part to celebrate his death I presume next-best Nixon's interpretation the orders action taken against Ellsberg this comes from the Watergate prosecutor proceedings never made public at the time because Nixon was pardoned if you remember before they had a chance to prosecute this fully the v cubed America's Hunt and Liddy again are called on to do it their track record being so sterling everything they've done have been so were wonderful they're called again and this time the Sturgess later tells a federal grand jury that the orders were not to sort of kill Ellsberg we just sort of you know break a leg or beat him up or something and they start a fight at the rally where Ellsberg is speaking Sturgess and Gonzalez and Barker Martinez the Cuban Americans brought up for the same five don't get to Ellsberg they fight with other people if you know Daniels we've never heard him talk he probably never even noticed it as he talked to fight going on you know a few feet belong and eventually a bunch of people are arrested and released the next day on White House somebody comes along with Secret Service passes and releases him in June they decide to do something the elections coming up in four months about the the no good no working bug and Larry O'Brien's phone and they asked John Mitchell we think the president they asked hunt and Liddy to go back and put new bugs in what the lady turned again to the Cuban Americans they meet at the Howard Johnson motel and they go in and while they're in before they get a chance to penetrate the offices they're caught by the police some guard has noticed that a piece of tape on the door and they're caught and if you think about it and the whole point of this story is that's where the movie begins if some of you saw it it begins with the break-in okay bear with me when did we learn about the secret b-52 bombing of Cambodia which was the fourth item of

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Cambodia which was the fourth item of impeachment against Richard Nixon putting bombs where nobody in Congress or in the government has authorized you to is basically equivalent to murder one in a lot of people's books was the fourth item of impeachment we learned in May 73 when did we learn about the unconstitutional and illegal wiretaps which are still being litigated by one Morton Halperin one of the taps in federal court we learned in May 73 when do we learn about the CIA activities against Chile we learned in September 74 when do we learn about the CIA in domestic spying spying at home in December 74 when did we learn about the activities against Ellsberg at all and the plumbers May June July of 73 after what they're all after one important date thereafter the 72 election so I would say to you that my definition of the press and more de gate is this if the American press had been able to penetrate any of the White House ongoing operations and don't forget by 1971 Richard Nixon in acquiescent to a break-in and Ellsberg's psychiatrists he had put a hundred and ten thousand tons of bombs on Cambodia over 14 months without getting caught I mean God last thing he was afraid of was us I would say that if the press had somehow managed to find one thing out in the first term of what I call the foreign policy watergate's Nixon Kissinger / / Watergate we might have had a couple of effects one we might have kept Nixon from himself if you've been caught out let's say bombing Cambodia might have been afraid to do the wiretapping have these clowns go back in and try and beat up people and go back into the wire there's nutty stuff they were doing you might have been hesitated twice my grounds that maybe he could get caught two maybe you know this isn't heavy Nixon save himself for myself but it's possible the second thing is the Democratic nomination for sure if any of the thread could have begun to have been unraveled in 71 let's say if reporter could have

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in 71 let's say if reporter could have written about a hundred and ten thousand tons of bombs it's almost amazing that we did not we certainly had to see the holes as they were all over the place maybe the Democratic nomination would have been a little tougher more hotly contested maybe he wouldn't have been left to George McGovern a decent but certainly a sure loser maybe you would had a more contested a more viable Democrat inserting a more viable candidates he's certainly a more viable election process Nixon could have won I'm not saying he Quinta but it certainly would have been a lot tougher than it was he swept everything if you remember McGovern got into it is 1000% for Tom Eagleton remember if you remember some of that sort of what am I saying I'm saying far the press far from having a victory mortar game in which everybody assumes that was exactly mine exactly what happened my reading of the history is simply this that we the press by failing to meet any of the standards that you might normally expect us to have and hold in reporting on the Nixon White House I think you could almost argue helped make Watergate help create it far from being the heroes of Watergate we fell down so badly that we made Nixon I guess we prevented Nixon from from stopping himself a little bit like people say Reagan should have been himself and if Jim Baker and the others me sandy ever had been around maybe Don Regan would have kept Reagan from being himself I think the analogy is very exact I guess the point is what I'm saying is again is what this whole story shows is that if the president wants the lie and the people want and round and want the lie to us don't expect us in the press to find out about it we can't if there's going to be a social revolution in the United States don't expects us don't expect us to lead it we won't even know about it for six months is another way of looking at it so it isn't going to be in our bag we and the press can't help you maybe you're not surprised maybe but

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you maybe you're not surprised maybe but a lot of people are we can't do a thing for you we can't do a single thing for you about it and where are we gonna do it what's gonna happen well I don't know in this case in the case of this government I think one of the things that's gonna have to happen ultimately is we're gonna have to have some political leader with enough courage to say that maybe our whole foreign policy should not be structured and simply unstopping the this Soviet style communists that maybe that a foreign policy that says it's okay to go into Grenada because somebody was threatened there and our students you know it's okay to

do it because the Grenadians the Grenadians loved us for it they do they were certainly feeling under the rest the Canadian citizens thought it was wonderful does that mean does that justify what we do I would venture that if we went into Chile and released the people from Pinochet the despot who's been ruling there he took over and said I'm gonna stay in power 90 days it's been a long 90 days is that our function to do we have an obligation that a design I don't think so and what does the world think about a country that can decide it can go into Grenada on for purposes it believes to be just that our national interest dictates that we this country of 240 million can go knock off a country of 110,000 what what can we tell mr. Gaddafi the next time he decides to go in the chat that you can't operate in what you perceive to be your best interests but we can do whatever we want in our best interests that morality is at the end of our guns and our tanks and our fighters well I think that's very short range and I don't think there's anything we in the press can do for you we cheerlead this stuff I guess one answer is going to be maybe Congress but you have to give Congress a d-minus too in the last 20 30 years everybody new in the Congress that mr. William Casey of the CIA had two things going for him basically he's probably 30 IQ points smarter than anybody else in the government and 30 times as devious everybody knew he was selling him a bill of goods but nobody had the guts to stand them up nobody would take on the Reagan people because Reagan was too popular we had some amazing spectacle in the first term of mr. Reagan we had a case in which

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of mr. Reagan we had a case in which some of you might remember when the Atlantic magazine published mr. Stockman's Stockman of the of the office of management of the budget directors a sort of candid assessment bill greider had a long piece in stock when December 1981 right at the time of the new budget in which Grider which stock would admitted that Donald Reagan's budget was a fraud that his notion of cutting deficits and reducing taxes than spending more on defense simply was impossible which since should have been clear so the Congress was confronted an early 82 with hearings on the new budget that said of course we can increase defense spending cut taxes and reduced the budget the deficit Congress was confronted with this budget this was the White House was telling him they had Stockman's testimony in the magazine that it was a total fraud so how did it what to do the answer was the call Stockman and say to him is that right and Stockman so it says no the magazine's wrong Congress says Oh fine and then proceeds to go through hearings on that budget as if indeed that magazine was wrong and Stockman is simply misspoken to the reporter and they marked up the budget as if nothing Stockman said I false stock I fought the but Congress as much as anybody by the way it's interesting the Stockman wrote a book that I recommend to all of you Stockman's book tells you more about wanto reagan than anything yet written and of course he was treated as a pariah the press joined in in trashing a Stockman for being somebody who defected and this message of the Stockwood book was totally ignored the message being that we had a presidency that was operating on the 6:30 news and nothing more well I'm not shy about my opinions I do remember this is the live free and die state I presume some of you are really concerned about the importance of stopping communism and we'll have a conversation and I sort of like to get into it I'm open for any question on anything that you want to ask me about my basic thesis is I guess to

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about my basic thesis is I guess to conclude let me say something to you that I'm a pessimist about the presidency I don't think we're gonna see any changes there's nobody in the horizon that's gonna take treated any differently whoever's gonna you know we are Jekyll and Hyde you do understand that when you know campaigning god knows they come through here like crazy I worked for when McCarthy was campaigning for the presidency he was campaigning against Lyndon Johnson I was expressed secretary and speech writers in the New Hampshire campaign of 68 I have a cold I was a speechwriter and and press secretary and and on the road with him all the time spent a lot of time in New Hampshire of course in which we did all right in the write-in vote and one of the things about it is that if gee whiz let me tell you it's terrific fun even if it's minus 12 in in Berlin Berlin right you know you can go on downstairs in the morning and some guys gotten up a half an hour before you and the car is gonna be 72 degrees and you're staying at the ritz-carlton as much as possible drinking seven dollar glasses of orange juice and you want something it's Learjets even

then and 68 it was all Learjets private jets and this fancy person we wish the paul newman used to travel with us and stuff like that very exciting wonderful time and so what we have is a presidency we have the kind of men who run for president who are the kind of men who can say gee honey take care of the kids tie those shoelaces brush that teeth for the next you know two two years I'm on the road it's its total hell vir it's really rough I'll see you and he can just walk out leave them all without barely a backward glance I mean let's face it when you do when you're on the road you're on the road you simply can't be a parent and a husband when you're in a campaign is they don't work it's impossible and so the kind of guy has to be the kind of narcissistic guy who could view his importance to solving the world's problems it's the way they view it as so important that he's gonna walk away from

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important that he's gonna walk away from the family for a couple years not an irrational trade-off for most people if you have a chance to be president while you do it but it does say something about certain value we had a case we're probably the classiest candidate for the Democrats Dale bumpers just said no there's too many other things I value so the kind of guy that does it has the kind of narcissism and the kind of notion that he can tell 240 million people what to do and that's the kind of way he looks at things and his values are such that the value of worrying about kids and schools and grades and stuff like that aren't enough to keep him there he's got to solve the world's problems and so we get stunned when this man once he gets elected of course one of the things we do in our society is he's our national leader and the first lady is the first lady and their family and they're we're all family oriented in our society and we're just stunned when we discover that our president hasn't seen his grandchild for 18 months since the grand channel has been born just done and we're stunned when every one of their children does nothing more than write books ripping him off or give speeches ripping him off we're just stunned that the family is like this and the answer of course is that's what you get that's the kind of people you get that's the craziness of our society you get this sort of narcissism driven people races a lot of profound questions in my mind about what you're gonna vote for what are we gonna vote for I guess we're gonna have to look at since no matter who you like President immediately decides he's King he is totally King none of the common or ordinary visitors of life no longer have much to do with him he's insulated from any reality nothing but yes-man anybody who's not a yes-man is out the door in two minutes I don't know what you do how do you do it I think the answer is when I vote again assuming that the candidates are similar in social issues I'm not going to worry about the foreign policy issue because I know they're gonna be the same they've always been the same they're gonna get in trouble and kick the commies innovative country if they have to you know if not Nicaragua something else they look good and get a lot of points in the press and the press will go along with him totally

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the press will go along with him totally I guess I'm gonna look at the integrity factor try and find somebody who I feel has more integrity than the other guy it's a crazy way to do it but that's where I'm at and something may change something may not we're still a wonderful country we can exist despite all these things but our national leadership doesn't have the integrity that any of you have in your family and I think that's a let's do some questions yes lah I'll repeat him

END